



Blended Learning Whitepaper

Getting the Recipe Right

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Blended Learning “Getting the Recipe Right”

Many training and development professionals have been “blending” their learning approaches for years. Instructor strategies such as study aids, peer support, and pre-requisite reading date back hundreds of years.

The only difference today is the variety, complexity and cost of tools available, as well as the seemingly endless combination of those tools. If you are like most trainers, you usually reach for the tool that has the most “est” to it – quickest, easiest, cheapest to use. It’s a cold day on the sun when a manager gives you as much time as you need, an unlimited budget, and all the support staff you can use to create your new training program.

The bottom line is: when and how do you blend instructional methodologies to create effective learning and increase student performance? Lets take a look at each of the factors that we commonly consider when evaluating tools.

Budget – Cheap(est)

The cost of developing a blended solution will depend on the complexity of the learning problem, the length of the program, and the specific methodologies employed. As you can see in the Sparrow Blended Learning Delivery Matrix study aids, rapid eLearning, webinars and web sites are some of the most affordable tools you can employ.

Sparrow Blended Learning Delivery Matrix¹

Delivery Method	Type	Instructional Value	Average Time To Develop	Average Costs	Scalability	Learner Tracking
CD-ROM Courseware	Self-Study	Excellent	7-12 weeks per seat hour	15k-25k per seat hour	Excellent	Moderate
Electronic Performance Support System (EPSS)	Self-Study	Very Good	9-15 weeks per seat hour	30k-60k per seat hour	Good	Excellent
Instructor Led Training	Live	Excellent	5-7 weeks per seat hour	\$800-\$1,000/day per student	Moderate	Moderate
Job Aids / Study Guides	Self-Study	Moderate	1-7 days	\$500-\$1,000	Excellent	Moderate
Online Facilitated Learning	Live	Excellent	2-3 weeks per seat hour	30k-60k per seat hour	Good	Good
Online Discussion / Chat	Live	Good	3-6 weeks per seat hour	15k-25k per seat hour	Good	Good
Rapid eLearning	Self-Study	Good	1-3 weeks per seat hour	5k-11k per seat hour	Excellent	Excellent
Video	Self-Study	Excellent	7-12 weeks per seat hour	40k-100k per seat hour	Good	Moderate

Web-based Training (WBT)	Self-Study	Excellent	4-9 weeks per seat hour	15k-25k per seat hour	Excellent	Excellent
Web-based Simulations	Self-Study	Excellent	5-10 weeks per seat hour	25k-35k per seat hour	Excellent	Excellent
Webinars	Live	Good	1-7 days per seat hour	1k-5k per seat hour	Excellent	Good
Web Sites	Self-Study	Moderate	2-3 weeks per seat hour	2k-10k per seat hour	Excellent	Moderate
Workshops / Labs	Live	Excellent	2-3 weeks per seat hour	\$800-\$1,000/day per student	Moderate	Good

Time to Deliver – Quick(est)

How fast do you need to create the program and get it into the hands of your students? From internal politics to a major performance challenge, the amount of time required to launch your program will directly impact your choice of learning solutions. In your possible choice of solutions, you can employ Rapid eLearning programs, Job Guides, and mass communication tools such as Webinars and Web Sites very quickly.

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Best Implementation – Easy(est)

Now the focus is on you and your team. Evaluation of your organization's strengths and weaknesses is key to success. If you work in a multimedia-rich environment then every learning challenge is another Flash animation opportunity. In a traditional corporation, however, lectures and workshops typically reign supreme. In both situations, the familiar approach is safer and easier for the training team to implement while venturing out of the team's "comfort zone" entails some risk.

So how do you approach expanding your training deliverables mix while working with a limited skill set? Working from your team's strengths is the best strategy while finding partners with specific expertise to bolster your skill sets. This strategy will enable you to consider the broadest range of training ingredients while minimizing your risk.

Most Efficient and Effective Blend – B(est)

The most important "est" of all! The holy grail of learning is finding the right combination of methodologies that, when produced with great attention to quality, result in improved performance among participants while creating the best possible learning experience. Your choice of blended solutions will also be impacted by other considerations such as the scale of the project, the size, location and sophistication of your audience, and the relative importance of the program within your training objectives.

When using blended approaches, your students need to understand that each component is "part" of a greater learning "whole". In the truest sense, blended learning is a journey that, when parts are combined effectively, will result in a truly rich learning experience.

1 - Costs used in the Sparrow Matrix are based off of historical data and not intended to be a quotation for future services.

A Blended Learning Case Study for Product Training

Sparrow Client – Fortune 500 Telecommunications Company

Training Need

A new product, that we will discuss as “Product X”, is being viewed as the foundation for the future of communications and will truly transform the way we communicate. This transformation in telecommunications offers tremendous value to all customers by leveraging the efficiencies and advanced communications capabilities of IP-based technology. This organization had expressed a desire to expose 80% of its affected business segments to multiple learning interventions within each of the following categories associated with their “Product X” offering by year-end '04.

- 1) Strategy and Direction
- 2) Solution Selling the Integrated Portfolio of Services
- 3) Technologies and Protocols

Learning Objectives for all Deliverables

- Explain the significance that “Product X” will have on the marketplace to a customer.
- Differentiate the business’ “Product X” capabilities from those of our competitors
- Describe, at a high level, the business’ common services infrastructure and the architectural application of “Product X” convergence to a customer
- Use a common set of “Product X” technical terms during internal discussions and external meetings with customers.
- Diagram examples of “Product X” architecture solutions
- Describe “Product X” economic models and technology factors that drive service adoption to a customer
- Engage a customer in a strategic discussion in order to understand their current and future needs
- Design a solution to meet the needs of the customer, comprised of the offerings in the business’ “Product X” portfolio, when provided with a specific business scenario.

Business Objectives

The business objectives of this training initiative are to improve the revenue production for “Product X”, increase operational efficiency, and establish the business as a leader in the marketplace.

Solution

The target audience consisted of a geographically diverse group of account executives who resided both domestically and internationally. It was important to provide training that was quick to market and robust to the target audience. The need for a blended solution quickly became evident. The deliverables included Rapid eLearning Webcasts, Instructor Led Training, Web-based courses and

training delivered via a web-based (Facilitated) Classroom. The decision was made to have 3 phases of delivery. Each phase was developed in order to satisfy a specific requirement. Here is a breakdown of each phase:

Phase 1

The need was to deliver training quickly to the entire audience in order to educate and stimulate interest in the new offers. Two Rapid eLearning Webcasts were created at the beginning of 2004 that highlighted the actual offer and the strategy for selling the offer.

Topic	Delivery Method	Estimated Time	Prerequisites
1. "Product X" Strategy and Direction and Portfolio	Rapid eLearning Webcasts	30 Minutes	None
2. Sales Engagement Process and Call to Action – Segment Specific	Rapid eLearning Webcasts	30 Minutes	Topic 1 - "Product X" Strategy and Direction and Portfolio Rapid eLearning

Phase 2

Since the deployment of Phase 1 the interest for the offer increased among the account executives. It was imperative to follow-up with quality training. The decision was made to create a road show type event (Instructor Led Training) that would provide the necessary training to account executives in the major markets. The road shows consisted of intense 2 day Instructor Led training sessions. This was only a temporary solution, as there were too many account executives to train in this fashion. During this phase, web-based training was being developed to provide the basic content of four major areas of the offer. Once the web-based training was developed, in Phase 3, then the road show content could be moved to an online platform.

Topic	Delivery Method	Estimated Time	Prerequisites
3. Company Strategic Direction for "Product X"	Instructor Led Training	1 Day	Topic 1 - "Product X" Strategy and Direction and Portfolio Rapid eLearning Topic 2 - Sales Engagement Process and Call to Action – Segment Specific Rapid eLearning
4. Company "Product X" Services: A Portfolio Perspective	Instructor Led Training	1 Day	Topic 3 - Company Strategic Direction for "Product X" Instructor Led Training

Phase 3

Using a proprietary web-based classroom (Facilitated) platform, Phase 3 consisted of moving all training content to a web-based format. Utilizing the feedback from the road show sessions, the web-based classroom course was created to expand the audience to account executives in smaller and international markets. The instructors that taught the road shows also facilitated the online courses.

Topic	Delivery Method	Estimated Time	Prerequisites
5. "Product X" Marketplace	Web-based Training (WBT)	2 Hours	Topic 1 - "Product X" Strategy and Direction and Portfolio Rapid eLearning Topic 2 - Sales Engagement Process and Call to Action – Segment Specific Rapid eLearning
6. "Product X" Technology	Web-based Training (WBT)	2 Hours	Topic 1 - "Product X" Strategy and Direction and Portfolio Rapid eLearning Topic 2 - Sales Engagement Process and Call to Action – Segment Specific Rapid eLearning
7. Economic Modeling and Customer Qualification	Online Facilitated Session	2 Hours	Topic 5 - "Product X" Marketplace WBT Topic 6 - "Product X" Technology WBT
8. Company Continuum Application Selling	Online Facilitated Session	2 Hours	Topic 7 - Economic Modeling and Customer Qualification

Web Based/Facilitated Sessions – Overview of Content

- Convergence marketplace/strategy/competition
- "Product X" technology
- Convergence economic models and sales discovery session leading
- Company's "Product X" Continuum Application Selling
- Segment-specific engagement processes and call to action
- Applied case studies and customer-oriented exercises

For all phases it was essential to keep the business objectives as the foundation for all development. Adhering to these objectives allowed the development team to create consistent training regardless of the delivery type.

Results

The phased approach was an integral part to the success of the training. However, the key component was that a scalable blended approach to training was implemented. Considering the various types of needs and the target audience, it was critical to develop a flexible training strategy that utilized every delivery type available.

Over the past year the training has reached over 2,500 account executives and continues to be one of the more popular training courses available for this client. A detailed ROI analysis is now being conducted by this client to measure the financial impact of this blended learning program.